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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the subject of student teaching from four different angles. The first, why student teaching is popular and successful, points out five positive benefits in this method of learning: (1) It offers a good opportunity for problem solving in real classroom situations; (2) Student teaching produces results that are emotionally satisfying. The support of supervising teachers and college supervisors provides encouragement. (3) Student teaching produces more growth than any other learning experience and develops self-confidence; (4) Student teaching provides possibilities for one-to-one encounters with pupils; (5) The goal of student teaching is self-development and not merely receiving a grade. The second facet of this subject is examined in the light of common misconceptions. Student teaching is not a process of introducing change in the schools, nor a place where the student teacher is to demonstrate that he knows how to teach. It also is not the terminal learning experience in professional education. It is not simple, but rather is tiring physically, exhausting mentally, and consumes a great deal of time. Current factors affecting student teaching are the third element discussed. Three major factors with the most significance for student teaching programs are identified: (1) More sophisticated performance and greater development will be expected in future student teachers; (2) Formalized legal agreements will become more common; and (3) Student teaching may become an avenue for future employment. Fourth, recommendations are made for the improvement of future student teaching programs. (JD)

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STUDENT TEACHING: THE STATE OF THE ART

(Presented at the AACTE Convention, Chicago, Illinois, February 22, 1978)

The last known assessment of the state of the art was conducted by Graham Pogue in 1968 in a conference on innovative programs in student teaching and their implication for state involvement. The major findings were that the prevalent sequence was a block plan with an interest in the internship as a model for the future. Simulations, microteaching, and videotape recorders were beginning to be employed, and there was a diversity of student teaching programs. There was a problem of providing adequate financing for and supervision of student teaching programs. Scientific analysis of teaching was employed as a possible way to improve student teaching and he was pessimistic that student teaching could bring about change and innovation. He also found virtual unqualified acceptance of student teaching from both friends and critics. That was 1968--a decade ago.

Since that time, we have witnessed considerable changes in teacher education. The seller's market has succumbed to a buyer's market. Funds for innovation have dwindled. The quest for relevance has lost the limelight and "Back to the Basics" shares the center stage with minimum competency testing. The educational community is painfully learning to cope with a deep cleavage between teacher and administration as well as between college board and professional educator, and the management--the union syndrome develops. Performance based teacher education has been debated, legislated, further debated, and half-heartedly implemented in some localities. We have been jarred by the Buckley Amendment, Title IX, Public Law 94-142, and a myriad of court decisions. The humanists have had their quests considered, complete with sensitivity training and values education. The traditional classroom was

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moved into classrooms without walls, and the Tower of Babel became respectable in educational practice under the rubric of open concept education.

Yet in all the change and turmoil in the past decade, the support for field experiences has been accepted as a basic dimension of teacher education, whatever the purposes or trends happen to be. It has a remarkable resiliency. Indeed the clamor for additional field experiences has not been ignored.

The Present Status of Student Teaching

The state of the art seems healthy and ready for growth. Student teaching is the pivotal component of the professional education of teachers. It is popular and considered to be mutually beneficial for both the teaching candidate and the cooperating school. It is supported by such studies as the extensive investigation made by Michigan and Indiana in the past few years. Both exhaustive studies support the conclusion that student teaching enhances the education programs of the schools in which students do their student teaching. Typical supportive comments include remarks such as the following:

Students make possible significantly more individual contact with youngsters in the classrooms.

Pupils receive more individual help and counseling.

More small group instruction is possible.

Provision for make up is better; exams are followed up better; study periods are better supervised; and playgrounds are better supervised.

Motivating of pupils is improved.

An informal survey of public school administrators at Indiana State University in 1977 indicated that a plurality preferred at least 12 weeks of student teaching instead of the present eight. Student teaching has not only survived, it has emerged virtually unscathed.

Why Student Teaching Is In The Present State

Although student teaching enjoys almost universal support, few people have attempted to identify the reason for its popularity. I submit that the following conditions tend to cause student teaching to remain as the focal point in teacher education:

1. It exemplifies what Dewey and his disciples have advocated in the concept of experience. It offers the best opportunity for problem solving situations. In addition, the student teacher is an active person in his development. He is responsible for his own destiny. Perhaps it is best characterized by a poem from John Preston:

> I am the captain of my soul.
> I rule it with firm joy,
> But to tell the truth I had more fun
> When I was just the cabin boy.

In other words student teaching is a marked contrast from the teaching style in most other university courses, including the so-called methods courses which may offer little or no contrast from a formal liberal arts course.

2. Student teaching produces results that are emotionally satisfying. The pure design of the program with its high level of involvement presents many opportunities for satisfaction. Thus the person is likely to experience many good feelings--more so than in the typical education class. In addition to this, a lot of people are offering encouragement and praise during this period. The school officials enjoy having him. Most supervising teachers are generous with their praise and college supervisors are generally supportive and empathetic. Even students have been known to team up in order to make a good impression when the supervisor is visiting. With all that support, it is a small wonder that the students find student teaching to be enjoyable.

3. Student teaching produces more growth than any other experience. A

former president at my institution once speculated that the student teaching period produced more change in the personality of the individual than any other eight week experience in the individual's life. Although this may be an overstatement, there is some evidence in the literature which supports the fact that considerable change results in the professional semester.

4. Student teaching is a one-to-one teaching encounter. In reality it is a methods class where the student is the only pupil. He is participating in individualized instruction at the classic level. Since we accept individualized instruction as the ultimate in good teaching, then we should expect that there are tremendous satisfactions from this program.

5. Goals are real rather than artificial. The intrinsic motivation and the joy in doing overshadows the concern for a grade. A person does not have to rely on some sort of vicarious symbol in order to be rewarded for assessment.

The success in student teaching can also be measured in terms of what it is not. I would like to shatter a few illusions about what student teaching is not in order to present a thorough perspective of this aspect of teacher preparation.

1. Student teaching is not a process of introducing change in the schools. Pogue observed this phenomena ten years ago, and I submit that it is just as valid today. Student teaching is a process of adjusting to the existing situation rather than introducing change. It is quite unrealistic in my opinion to assume that student teachers should introduce change. Let us consider the status of this person. First of all he is insecure in attempting to adjust to a new environment and survival is his main concern. Furthermore, he is the least experienced individual; history would indicate that the least experienced are not as effective in creating change as a more experienced. Finally, he has little or no power or status in the system. The secretary of

the school is going to be much more influential and the custodian may have considerably more power than he. I feel that we should recognize that the student teacher is a learner and not a reformer.

2. Student teaching is not a place where the teaching candidate is to demonstrate that he knows how to teach. Many students feel unprepared because they feel they are going into student teaching without knowledge of what teaching is all about. An analogy would be a student who resists taking a class in mathematics because he doesn't know anything about it. Student teaching is designed for the person to learn about teaching and to continue his growth rather than be an exhibitor of the latest techniques and ideas in teaching. At best it leads to some understanding of the school, socialization (adjustment to the environment), and the development of some skills (mostly custodial in nature) which are sufficient to allow the teaching candidate to function without the direct intervention of a supervisor.

3. Student teaching is not the terminal learning experience in professional education. It should not be treated as the final chapter, but regarded as a growth process. Its goals are to lead to self-analysis and decision making so that the teacher may monitor his own growth by assessing his strengths and weaknesses.

4. Student teaching is not simple nor is it just another requirement. The process is tiring physically, exhausting mentally, and probably more time consuming than any other block of studies. Both the students and the university should plan accordingly if complete growth is to occur.

Current Factors Affecting Student Teaching

I would identify three major factors which seem to have the most implication for future student teaching programs.

1. Student teaching is being affected by the initiation of field experiences which occur prior to student teaching. This phenomena may provide the greatest

impact in terms of change. Some of the functions of student teaching will be accomplished by this field experience component. I refer to such concepts as screening and development of rudimentary student teaching skills. The early contact with schools should mean that student teachers may be better adjusted to the schools when they begin student teaching and they may be more skilled. Therefore, we have a right to expect more sophisticated performance and greater development.

2. Formalized agreements are becoming more common. The legal status of student teaching is being defined by statute more frequently. But according to Fred Swalls in his book, The Law and Student Teaching, there were 36 states in 1976 that had legislation to student teaching. Ten years before there were only six. Swalls observed that the range of legislation covered a great variety of topics including the authority to teach in a public school, liability coverage, the nature of clinical training (for example: Indiana has just mandated nine weeks), credentialing, the rights and responsibilities of student teachers compared to regular teachers, the certification of student teachers, and the law on dismissing a student teacher from a student teaching assignment or denying a student the right to student teach.

Hazard has speculated that "The really important educational decisions are being made in the Congress and the courts." The evidence indicates that student teachers will experience the impact as much or more than any other part of the professional education scene.

3. The static employment picture. Student teaching may more and more be considered as an avenue for securing a teaching position. Since employment opportunities are more restricted, students have to be more alert for possibilities for securing a position. It is interesting to note that my own institution has found that there was an increase of 10 percent last year in

the number of institutions who hired student teachers who had completed their practicum in their school district. This has tremendous implication for the placement of students. Furthermore, the evaluation form becomes of more concern. The days are past when only a cursory look was given to this instrument. In addition, there are indications that the internship may reappear in a form which have persons taking an initial position at a partial salary while receiving supervision for college credit. This lofty objective perhaps is advocated for the wrong reason, that being the fact that persons will accept lower paying positions in order to secure their first job. The future indicates that the present employment picture will remain and these concomitant pressures will remain on the student teacher.

The Future in Student Teaching

Although we are on the crest of satisfying student teaching needs, we need to make specific moves in order to improve its status as a respectable part of the educational community. It seems to me that one of the major concerns is to determine what changes actually result in student teaching. What content or skills are actually taught during student teaching? Do they concentrate on facts or do they use such processes as reasoning ability, creative thinking, value judgment, etc.? In other words, what kinds of changes in communicative processes result during student teaching?

In the second place, we need to look more closely at what changes in human relations. We have some inkling from research for example. Attitudes of student teachers tend to gravitate toward the attitudes held by supervising teachers. Student teachers tend to move away from liberal and democratic attitudes to more rigid and formalized attitudes. Students tend to become more custodial and bureaucratic by the end of student teaching. Finally, it is observed that the student teacher becomes more traditional in his or her view of classroom management.

These results are not all positive. If they are true, then one of our challenges is to present some sort of design in our programs which causes teaching candidates to emerge with more positive, empathetic attitudes toward children. What kinds of processes can be developed which cause teachers to be warm, empathetic and enthusiastic instead of becoming more hostile toward the young lives which they are influencing?

In the third place, we need to be aware of what actual teaching techniques are developed during student teaching. Does the student teacher actually learn processes of teaching? What kinds of strategy does he learn?

Next I would submit that we need more effective programs for the preparation of supervising teachers. The research and literature indicate that cooperating teachers substantially influence the behavior of student teachers. It is shown that students tend to imitate their teachers in the field. In a well-designed study by Copeland, the investigator indicated that microteaching skills learned in the laboratory were lost unless there was intervention by the cooperating teachers. If the teacher exhibited the target skill, the student teacher viewed it as useful. If not, the student did not view it as useful regardless of his preparation. Copeland concluded that we must provide training which complements the training received by students. We cannot assume that an amount of student teaching experience coupled with some advanced graduate study prepares a person for supervision. We must prepare a supervising teacher to be skilled in the role of teachers of future teachers.

Finally we need increased input from college supervisors. Frenzel found that classroom supervisors, students, and principals all perceived that the college supervisor is a key person in student teaching. He is a skilled professional who can analyze teaching and provide perspective on the total situation. He is also the individual who can prepare supervising

teachers for their responsibilities. We need continued support for a cadre of professional college supervisors and we need to constantly analyze their roles and how they can most constructively improve student teaching programs.

In conclusion, I think it is fair to observe that student teaching is still an art and probably always should be to some extent. Appreciation, self-expression, feelings, individual styles, creativity, sensitivity, and values are traits which should be included in the repertoire of a teacher. But while recognizing these values, we need to work to make the experience more predictable so that we can say ten years hence that we know what happens during student teaching and that we can control it to some extent.

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